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## Threat

The DOE Office of Counterintelligence (OCI) advises that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, espionage activities continue unabated. In fact, there is evidence that the intelligence threat has actually grown over the last decade, as national priorities have shifted to include economic and technological information in addition to the more traditional classified military/security information.

Elicitation requires patience. Pieces of information collected over an extended period of time can include the final piece of the puzzle needed to solve a complex problem or save the expenditure of scarce research money.

## Potential

Keep in mind that a key objective in any espionage operation is to **MAKE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR THE TARGET TO SHARE HIS OR HER INFORMATION**. Elicitation appears only to be normal conversation among colleagues and friends. What is more natural than that! We do it all the time. Many professionals encourage conversation, especially discussion of theories, concepts and plans. It is a spy's dream come true! No skulking about dark street corners – just normal conversations in pleasant surroundings – **LIKE RESTAURANTS – LIKE CONFERENCES, HOTELS – OR THE HOMES OF COLLEAGUES**. Whether a particular conversation is elicitation or merely innocent inquisitiveness would be very difficult to tell, and ultimately makes no difference in your need to be cautious and aware of what you can and cannot say.

So remember, on your next trip or during any conversation with a foreign colleague...

**BE AWARE TO WHOM YOU ARE SPEAKING AND TO WHOM YOUR CONVERSATION MAY BE REPORTED. DON'T BE PARANOID, JUST BE CAREFUL.**

# Elicitation Response

If you should ever feel you are being drawn into a conversation that is making you uncomfortable, keep these points in mind:

- YOU ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO TELL ANYONE ANY INFORMATION THEY ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO HEAR – THAT INCLUDES PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU OR YOUR COLLEAGUES
- YOU CAN SIMPLY IGNORE ANY QUESTION YOU THINK IS IMPROPER AND CHANGE THE TOPIC
- DEFLECT THEIR QUESTION WITH ONE OF YOUR OWN
- GIVE A NONDESCRIPT ANSWER
- IF APPROPRIATE, SIMPLY SAY YOU DO NOT KNOW
- AVOID SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL
- IF ALL ELSE FAILS SUGGEST YOU WOULD HAVE TO CLEAR SUCH DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR COUNTERINTELLIGENCE OR SECURITY OFFICE

## Reporting Contacts with Foreign Nationals

Presidential Decision Directive NSC-12 and DOE Order(s) require that government employees/contractors report the following:

- All Foreign Travel outside the fifty states and U.S. possessions and territories
- Any contact with Foreign Nationals from Sensitive Countries.
- Contacts by any person as described below:
- Illegal or unauthorized access is sought to classified or otherwise sensitive information.
- The employee is concerned that he/she may be the target of actual or attempted exploitation by any foreign entity.

Because elicitation is so subtle and difficult to recognize, report any suspicious conversations to your local counterintelligence or security officer.

For further information on this topic, please call the CH Counterintelligence Information Line.

630-252-5500

## Elicitation: What Is It?

In the espionage trade, elicitation is the term applied to subtle extraction of information during an apparently normal and innocent conversation.

Conducted by a skillful intelligence collector, elicitation appears to be normal social or professional conversation and can occur anywhere – in a restaurant, at a conference, or during a visit to one's home.

# Why Elicitation & What Is Its Appeal to Today's Spy?

As an intelligence technique, elicitation exploits several fundamental aspects of human nature.

- Most of us want to be polite and helpful, so we answer questions even from relative strangers.
- We want to appear well informed about our professional specialty, so we may be tempted to say more than we should.
- We want to be appreciated, and to feel that we are doing something important and useful. As a result, we often talk more expansively in response to praise about the value or importance of our work.
- As open and honest people, we are often reluctant to withhold information, lie, or be suspicious of others' motives.

**U. S. Department of Energy  
Chicago Operations Office  
Office of Counterintelligence**